

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
 INTERVIEW WITH JOHN McLAUGHLIN ON PBS-TV PROGRAM, "ONE ON ONE"  
 PENTAGON  
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MR. McLAUGHLIN: Vital national interests. How should American military power be used in the post-Soviet era? We'll ask the Secretary of Defense William Perry.

NARRATOR: From Washington, DC, John McLaughlin's "One on One," an unrehearsed, probing, inside exchange with and about the people making the news. Sponsored in part by the Mutual of Omaha Company -- protection for your changing world; and by the Archer Daniels Midland Company -- ADM, supermarket to the world.

Here's the host, John McLaughlin.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: When does it make sense to put American troops in harm's way? Haiti? Bosnia? Rwanda? Cuba? North Korea? Macedonia? Iraq? We'll find out.

Born, Vandergrift, Pennsylvania; 67 years of age; Wife, Leigh (sp); five children. Penn State, PhD, mathematics. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, non-commissioned officer; Japan and Okinawa, post-World War II, one year. U.S. Army Reserve, 2nd Lieutenant, artillery, seven years. GTE Sylvania, electronic defense laboratories, California, director, 10 years. ESL, Inc., military electronics company, California, founder and president, 13 years. Note the broken bat. Carter administration, Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering; called by Sam Nunn, quote, "the father of stealth

technology"; four years. Technology Strategies and Alliances, consulting firm, California, chairman, eight years. Stanford University, Center for International Security and Arms Control, co-director and professor, four years. Decorations, numerous, domestic and foreign, including awards from the U.S. Army, NASA, the Defense Department, Germany, France. Clinton administration, Deputy Secretary of Defense, one year; Secretary of Defense, six months and currently.

William James Perry, it's One on One.

Mr. Secretary, how do you decide when to use the military?

SEC. PERRY: There are three basically different categories in which our military is used -- very different. And a lot of the discussion about how to use the military is confused by not making a clear distinction among those. Those in which our vital national security interests are involved.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Vital national security interests.

SEC. PERRY: Vital national security is one category.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: That's the standard that's been in existence for some --

SEC. PERRY: Been in existence for a long time. It's when the survival of the United States or it's allies is threatened. That's vital national security interest. There are only three cases in the world today where I would point that out. And that is Russia -- today still has 25,000 nuclear weapons. Therefore, even though we have friendly relations with Russia, we have to be very concerned about that.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: What about the other two? What are those?

SEC. PERRY: Korea, Korea. Both because of the million man army and because of the developing nuclear program, and they are -- we are now allied with South Korea, they threaten South Korea so therefore are vital national interests at stake. And the Mid-East. Mid-East, the survival of Israel is m important to the United States, the flow of oil is important, and we see some of these countries trying to develop nuclear weapons.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: What's the second criteria?

SEC. PERRY: The second criteria is national interest. The survival of the U.S. and allies is not at stake, but there are still important interests at stake. One example of that would be in the Central and Eastern European -- which are making a transition now, to democracy, to market reform. We care a lot about that transition going well.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Are you talking about Bosnia?

SEC. PERRY: Well, in addition to that there's the Balkans. Let's separate out the Balkans where we have a war going on -- a civil war going on now in Bosnia.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Right.

SEC. PERRY: There we have interests -- national interests at stake. Our interests primarily are involved in seeing that war not spread, not see a wider Balkan war, or even a war that spreads out beyond the Balkans. And so that's the national interest but it's not -- our survival is not at stake. The survival of an ally is not at stake.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So, there would have to be something additional involved there?

SEC. PERRY: Yes. We still -- we are involved there in what I would call coercive diplomacy. Now coercive diplomacy involves a threat of the use of military force, and therefore you might have to make that threat good. But it's a very different situation when the vital national interests -- where we are prepared to go into a war to deal with it.

And the third case in which military forces are used, but not military force -- in humanitarian situations. Rwanda is the best current example where because of the United States military has the unique capability to prevent a catastrophe in the world, our forces have been called in.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: In calculating whether to send military forces to function in a humanitarian capacity you calculate levels of risk and you also bring into the equation the ability to withdraw whenever you want to conduct that operation. Correct?

SEC. PERRY: Both of those are very important. Before we go in we have to first of all satisfy ourselves that it is a unique requirements -- only the U.S. military can perform, and that was certainly true in Rwanda, and we have to protect our troops when go in there. And we -- that's based on our assessment of the threat and based on how many MPs we send -- military police we send in to protect them.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Where --

SEC. PERRY: We have to know how to get them out of there, too.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Where does Haiti fit into the schema?

SEC. PERRY: It's in the national interest, but not vital national interest category. Our interests in Haiti are fairly straightforward. It's promoting democracy in the hemisphere, preventing the flow of refugees to the United States. The survival of the United States is not threatened by any actions going on in Haiti today.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Admiral Moorer participated in a program on the subject of an invasion of Haiti, and as you know, he conducted the 1965 military operation in the Dominican Republic. He said when the question was put to him, "I think it would be a very negative idea in the sense that American troops are bound to get killed. Even in the Dominican Republic we had not only the 82nd Airborne, but a large contingent of Marines, and we people killed." I'm reading from his transcript. And so I just don't think that the lives of these American boys are worth trying to trying to establish order in Haiti." He went on to say even further -- he says, "It's nonsense. Nonsense. You've got the junta. They're armed. They consider this a life-and-death fight. And so some of our people are going to get killed, and you can bet your bottom dollar that the United States troops" -- he's talking about Haiti here -- "any time you have an allied operations, the United States is always the one in the forefront. And when the dirty tricks or dirty work comes up, the Americans are detailed. That's exactly what happened in Somalia."

What do you think of those observations of an

experienced hand in military operations?

SEC. PERRY: Yeah, I would say, first of all, that what we're -- that our approach in Haiti is not the approach of going in with a war. Our approach is coercive diplomacy. I want to emphasize that phrase. In coercive diplomacy, we're trying to force an action through sanctions, even through the threat of military force. But when you make the threat, you have to be prepared to carry it out. Therefore --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: How about the extrication problem?

SEC. PERRY: If we go into Haiti -- and I by no means believe that we're going to have to go into Haiti. I do believe that the coercive diplomacy course we're on right now has a good chance of succeeding. That is our first objective. Military in this case -- the use of military is a last resort. It's the last alternative. It's not the first alternative.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Let me ask you this. The New York Times reported that a conversation took place -- I guess it was a meeting actually -- with the -- with some members of the Defense Department, notably Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. And he argued at that meeting that offering incentives to the leaders of Haiti was morally repugnant. There had been discussion of giving them some money and moving them to Southern France or whatever to get them out. And the front-page article in The New York Times continues on the date of August the -- September the 4th, "Mr. Talbott was said to favor an early invasion. In a sharp exchange, Mr. Perry countered instead that Mr. Talbott represented a strange morality. Perry argued that it would be immoral for the United States not to do whatever it could to avoid the loss of lives of American soldiers and the expenditure of taxpayers' money." Is that a correct rendering of that exchange between you and Strobe Talbott?

SEC. PERRY: No, that's very incomplete and very exaggerated. The position that I had then, the position I have now is that invasion is a last alternative, a last resort. We have to explore all other alternatives first. The other alternatives are the course of diplomacy we are employing now,

and it can include -- it can include unconventional approaches. And that's my position and I think that's a -- the account in the New York Times was a caricature of that position.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Do you think that there would be American casualties in an invasion?

SEC. PERRY: I think any of the actions we're talking about that involve the use of military force has a risk of casualties. Even our humanitarian operations have a risk of casualties. We have hundreds of deaths every year from accidents that occur.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Are you satisfied that diplomacy has been exhausted in trying to resolve this stalemate in Haiti?

SEC. PERRY: No, it's not exhausted yet. We are still pursuing diplomatic initiatives. I call them coercive diplomacy. That is, we're not -- which is very different because we're putting pressure behind the diplomacy, strong pressure, in this case sanctions being one of the most obvious ones.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Does it contribute to your decision the factor that Aristide is a controversial figure? There's proof positive in video that he encouraged this abominable practice of necklacing. There are a variety of other abuses that he has (been) said to have been involved in during the seven months when he was president and in the two or three intervening months from the time of his election in 1990 to 1991 when he was yet to be sworn into office. In addition to that, there are questions raised about the \$50 million that have come into the country. He's paying \$75,000 a month to Michael Barnes, a former congressman, to lobby for him. That's a lot of money. He's paying another -- an additional \$10,000 a month to another lobbyist by the name of (Burt Wise ?). He is a disputable figure.

Do you feel any discomfort in restoring him to allegedly restore democracy when there are apparently so many shortcomings, which is the most charitable designation I think most of us could put upon what he brings to that office?

SEC. PERRY: Well, I never had an

opportunity to vote for President Aristide, but the Haiti people did, and two-thirds of them, more than two-thirds of them did vote for him. I think that's an important point. I think the other important point is that among all of this information being passed out about Aristide, there is disinformation, as well. The military regime in Haiti today has their own reasons for wanting to pass out information about President Aristide. So you have to evaluate this information.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I'm sure you're familiar with the CIA report on him.

SEC. PERRY: I am very familiar with the CIA report.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Which says, in effect, that he's a mental case.

SEC. PERRY: That report includes information and disinformation.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It does?

SEC. PERRY: It does.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: The CIA's putting out disinformation?

SEC. PERRY: No. The CIA reports the information that they get, which includes disinformation, so the problem of evaluating that information is very difficult indeed.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Just one more point on this, not to put too fine a point on it, but in discussion with people who know Cedras' mind, it is said that he wants to run for president and he is contemplating this idea that he would leave office for a year, from September to September, be granted exile with security, and then return and run for office against Aristide, and Aristide would go back in this September. Do you follow me?

SEC. PERRY: I do.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: What do you think of that idea?

SEC. PERRY: Well, I think, first of all, we have an elected official, the president, and I think he has the right to finish that term. The first step is to get him back there so he can finish that term. And then the second step would be the reelection, which will come up when this term is finished. Whether Cedras is going to be qualified to compete in that is going

to be really up to the Haitian people to decide, not for me to decide.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: But you do favor exhausting diplomacy before any military action is undertaken, and really exhausting it?

SEC. PERRY: I favor exhausting it, including, as I said, coercive diplomacy.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We'll be right back with the Secretary Defense William Perry.

(Announcements.)

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Do you think that the North Koreans are stringing us along, Mr. Secretary?

SEC. PERRY: I've been concerned about that from the beginning. But at least if we look at their performance in the last few days in this third round of talks, it has been business-like and straightforward and they've talked about serious issues. We do not have a final agreement yet, but the discussions have been productive and business-like.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Can I return you in time to when you were asked about the Korean situation a few months ago, and you said that we feel that they have nuclear weapons, or some probability of that, but we should hold them at that level. I'm paraphrasing you, and I hope not in exactly, and you're free to correct me. Okay? I think we should freeze them at level, and then as time goes on, over the course of time, try to roll them back. Remember that?

SEC. PERRY: I said freeze them and roll them back. I don't think I put the -- I don't think I suggested that we should take a long time to roll them back.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Well, I didn't mean to put that --

SEC. PERRY: No.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: -- amount of length in my description.

SEC. PERRY: Right.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: However, you said freeze and roll back?

SEC. PERRY: Freeze and roll back.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay. Is that pretty much the policy of the Clinton administration?

SEC. PERRY: Yes. While we're negotiating as we speak, there's an agreement to freeze.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay.

SEC. PERRY: We also want an agreement to roll back.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We know that the five major nuclear superpowers have the bomb. They've had it since 1968. They're the original members of the club. That's China, it's Russia, it's the United States, it's Great Britain and -- who am I forgetting?

SEC. PERRY: You have France.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: France has it, too. Okay. Then in addition to that, we know that India and Pakistan have the bomb. Pakistan may have six to 10; India's got 60. Now, they're not in the club. Do you think that we should just kind of freeze where they are and hope that they --

SEC. PERRY: First of all, I don't want to affirm how many nuclear bombs or devices they may have. I certainly will concede that they have a nuclear program, and it's a program we're greatly concerned about. I just don't want to affirm the actual numbers of weapons they may have. It's a matter of great concern, and one of our principal objectives in dealing both with India and Pakistan is to get both of them to back off these programs and agree to a non-nuclear southern Asia. It's been very difficult. We've made very little headway in that today.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: You know better than I do that India is very worried about China. China has the bomb. And there's no way that China is going to be divested of the bomb. It's one of the original members of the club. It's a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So with China having the bomb, India -- you can't roll back India. And if India has the bomb, Pakistan can't be rolled back either.

SEC. PERRY: You're expressing exactly the logic which you will find in the Indian government and the Pakistani government, and that has led to a proliferation of nuclear weapons in southern Asia. Exactly.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Right. Well, what are you going to do -- where is the United States headed in this dangerous era when you have Libya, Algeria, Syria, North Korea, Iran and Iraq? They're all wannabes in the club. They're

all sovereign states. We're members of the club. We sit back and we say, "You can't join the club." By what right do we do that, number one?

SEC. PERRY: If you take India and Pakistan in particular, for the reasons you described, it's going to be very difficult to get them to agree to give up the right to have nuclear weapons. An intermediate objective might be to get some degree of control over those programs, get the two countries agreeing with each other on some level of control. We had -- the United States and the Soviet Union for years had nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon agreements on how to control those to prevent their -- to minimize the probability of their use. So the desirable objective in India and Pakistan would be to get them to give up the nuclear program. Failing that, failing that, an important objective would be to get a level of dialogue between the two countries that minimized the chance that they would ever be used.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: You certainly want to prevent those wannabes that I mentioned, Syria and the others, from getting the bomb.

SEC. PERRY: Absolutely.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: How do you do that?

SEC. PERRY: We're doing that through -- first of all, you cannot be sure of doing it, but we're doing it through a series of controls that slow down the access to technology. In the case of Iraq, we actually used military force to curtail their program. In the case of Korea, we've already discussed that. We have a vigorous coercive diplomacy to try to get that program stopped.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: One quick question before we move off this subject, and that's the front-page story in Friday's New York Times. "The German authorities have discovered a second tiny sample of weapons-grade nuclear material believed to have been smuggled out of Russia to interest foreign governments or terrorist groups that might want to build atomic bombs." Small amounts. One ten-thousandth of the amount necessary to build a nuclear explosive. But it's a dangle. Presumably they would say, "There's more where this came from;

would you like to buy it?" So the possibility of terrorists using the bomb must occupy a lot of your attention. Does it?

SEC. PERRY: It's a matter of very great concern. Fortunately, in the case you're talking about, the amount is too small to be significant relative to making bombs. Nevertheless, it suggests somebody had access to some amount of nuclear material which they're willing to sell. It's a principal matter of concern not only to us, it's a matter of great concern to Russia, and so far they have been successful in controlling the flow of nuclear materials out of their country, but it is matter of great concern.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Are you inspired to encourage a larger budget for the CIA to develop an intelligence capacity to deal with this possibility? You've got 25,000 nuclear warheads sloshing around in the Soviet Union, you've got nuclear scientists over there who are either under-employed or unemployed. Isn't this a major threat? Is this not the major threat that you're faced with today?

SEC. PERRY: The way of dealing with that threat is, first of all, understanding it better, which is what you suggest with the CIA. It is, as we said, a top priority.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: And infiltrating the membership of these terrorist groups.

SEC. PERRY: Yes. This is a top priority for the CIA, there's no question about that, it already is.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: And for you?

SEC. PERRY: And for me. And it's not only a matter of learning more about it, but it's taking what actions we can to try to control it. We have a number of programs with Russia to help them control the flow of nuclear materials.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay, is this a precise matter of your concern, and that is a protective shield around this country? Are you inspired, as some are in the Congress, to reverse their positions on the "Star Wars" and now support it, as Congressman Glickman has apparently moved himself into doing?

SEC. PERRY: The first line of defense is our Nunn-Lugar program. The Nunn-Lugar program provides funds for the United States to help Russia dismantle the nuclear programs -- the nuclear weapons they have that they've already agreed to take down, and it helps control the nuclear material. That is our first line of defense, and that's my principal concern in trying to deal with this problem, is to prevent the problem rather than try to defeat it once it gets started.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: What about "Star Wars?"

SEC. PERRY: "Star Wars" -- one aspect of the ballistic missile defense, one aspect of that is very important today and that is our theater missile defense, the defense against short-range ballistic missiles. This is what our primary priority on the Defense Department is today relative to ballistic missiles with a short range because those missiles exist.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We'll be right back with Secretary of Defense Perry.

(Announcements.)

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Mr. Secretary, you were in Rwanda. What are your impressions of that horror?

SEC. PERRY: First of all, it is a horror. It's a human tragedy of enormous proportions. There are 4 million refugees scattered around various four or five different countries. There are a million of them in Goma alone. And they were dying, at the time I was there, at a rate of 3,000 a day. Now, the U.S. intervention, humanitarian intervention, has turned that around already. Nearly all of the cholera deaths have stopped now. We simply brought in fresh water supply, water distribution systems. By providing the engineering and the airlift support, I think we have turned that around. There are many other problems in Rwanda. There's dysentery, there's a problem of disorder at the camps.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: How have the American military been received?

SEC. PERRY: Very well.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: About 2,500 of our servicemen and servicewomen over there.

SEC. PERRY: There are about 2,000 in the region and another 500 involved with the airlift operations.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: You don't see any problem with extracting them, and you don't see a very high level of risk over there, do you?

SEC. PERRY: As soon as we complete the aspect of the relief which is unique to U.S. military, bringing in these huge -- this complex equipment in the huge airlift airplanes, we're going to phase these operations over to the U.N. and to the non-governmental organizations that provide relief. We are -- my job is managing an army, not managing a salvation army. But when we have a unique capability to perform that can save thousands of lives, we did it.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Do you see this situation in Rwanda replicating itself elsewhere in West Africa?

SEC. PERRY: There is a comparable situation in Burundi, that is a comparable danger in terms of the

tensions between the Hutus and the Tutsis in that country and, therefore, that is a worrisome situation as well. The situation in southwestern Rwanda today, where the French are presently providing stability, will be in danger as the French forces leave. They plan to leave in a week or so. And so we have to get a U.N. force in to provide the peacekeeping in that area by the time the French leave.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: In the time that remains, I'd like to take a look with you at a graphic of America's global troop deployment. As you can see on the screen there, Mr. Secretary, the total troops that we have around the world is 1.6 million. You're trying to reduce that force, are you not?

SEC. PERRY: We'll be bringing the force over the next few years down to 1.45 million in round figures.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: In the Europe theater, the following countries, is where our forces are distributed: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Macedonia, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Turkey, U.K., afloat in 22 other nations. What jumps out at you? How about Germany with that over 100,000 figure? Whom are we defending over there?

SEC. PERRY: This is, of course, the residue of the NATO force. We did have 300,000 in Germany just a few years ago. We've brought that down to 100,000. I believe that is a good number, a good base number to keep in Germany. We provide, first of all, stability for all of Europe by having those forces out there. Secondly, it is a place from which we can base for sending troops to other regions. That's where we sent our forces, a large number of our forces who went to Desert Storm, for example, came from Germany.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: A hundred thousand is about your floor?

SEC. PERRY: A hundred thousand for Western Europe, including Germany, is my floor.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We have 309 American servicemen and women in Macedonia, right? And they're presumably holding -- or exerting a presence there in order to restrain the Serbs if they chose to move into Macedonia?

SEC. PERRY: We have -- we're part of a battalion, a U.N. peacekeeping battalion in Macedonia, which is made up of about half Nordics and half Americans, and their job is to observe the border. They do provide some -- I believe some deterrent effect to the war spreading from Serbia into Macedonia.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We're almost out of time. I don't think we're going to be able to complete this global analysis. But what we just saw, we saw 8,300 American troops in Turkey. I guess that's in the Operation Provide Comfort for the Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq?

SEC. PERRY: That's the biggest part of that operation there. We run -- we continue to run Operation Provide Comfort, which is protecting the Kurds from the Iraqis. We have a -- we enforce a no-fly zone, for example, which keeps Iraqi airplanes from flying into that area. It has been an important area in protecting the Kurds from the Iraqis.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Do you anticipate American troops in the Golan Heights?

SEC. PERRY: That's a possibility. We have supported this peace agreement, and if the Syrians and the Israelis arrive at a peace agreement which requires third-country forces there, certainly the U.S. would be a candidate for that.